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Pakistan, U.S. Resolve Dispute Over F16s

By Richard M. Weintraub
Washington Post Staff Writer

As Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq began his first state visit to the United States, the State Department announced yesterday that six advanced F16 fighter-bombers will be on their way shortly to the South Asian nation, following resolution of a dispute over electronic gear.

The six F16s, the first of a 40-plane deal, as well as Zia's visit, are symbolic of a revival of U.S.-Pakistani relations spurred by the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a subject that is expected to loom large in the discussions with Zia.

The Pakistani leader, who seized power in a military coup July 5, 1977, met with Secretary of State George P. Shultz yesterday before Shultz' departure for Europe and has a formal White House session scheduled with President Reagan today.

The F16s were to have been delivered before the Zia visit, but Pakistani officials balked when they discovered that the planes they were to receive were not equipped with advanced electronic equipment that

served Israeli pilots so well in their latest clashes with the Syrian Air Force over Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

U.S. officials said yesterday that the contract for the F16s had included vague language referring to the advanced electronics after U.S. technical negotiators had agreed to specific Pakistani inquiries. Just why the planes were not then fitted with the equipment remains unclear.

It is understood that the first six planes will be delivered in early January and subsequently fitted with the advanced avionics once the equipment is adapted to Pakistan's particular defense needs. The remaining 34 planes, which are to be delivered by the end of 1984, are to be fitted before delivery.

In addition to solving their differences over the F16s, the two countries also announced yesterday that they had agreed to form a joint commission to promote cooperation in economic, commercial, scientific, technological, educational and cultural affairs.

The commission, similar to one formed by the United States and India several years ago, was hailed by Zia as he left the State Depart-

ment yesterday as a development which "we hope... will be a cementing force in improving the relations of two very old partners...."

Although the two countries share common strategic interests over Afghanistan and stability in the Persian Gulf region, the relationship even since the Soviet invasion has been a wary one, reflecting both severe strains during the 1970s and continuing differences over Pakistan's nuclear program.

As the Pakistani leader entered the State Department, about a dozen protesters, half of them Pakistanis, shouted anti-Zia slogans from a block away.

The Pakistanis were supporters of the Pakistan People's Party, led by Nusrat Bhutto, widow of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was executed in 1979 after being convicted of complicity in the murder of a political foe.

Mrs. Bhutto is receiving medical treatment in West Germany. U.S. officials said yesterday that she has a visa for the United States but they did not know if she was planning a visit.